

## DAFFY-NITIONS, PART III

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By Arthur Houle (with an itsy bit of gratuitous help from Dave Follweiler and other friends)

*The first installment of Arthur Houle's warped music terms was published in the Fall 1989 issue of Piano Quarterly. This was followed by more extensive linguistic abuse in the December/January 2005/2006 issue of American Music Teacher. The long wait is over! You'll "Houle" with delight over this third manifestation (infestation?) of obfuscatory lexiconographical malfeasance.*

- Accidental:** The only explanation for your student's flawless performance.
- Adagio:** In the Baroque Era this meant "adagio," or "at ease." Current definition is "molto mortuary, quasi funeralis" (or, in English, "deathly serious").
- Agitato:** What caffeine does to your playing.
- Alla breve:** 1. Short but courageous deity. 2. Finding religion at halftime.
- Baby grand:** An oxymoron.
- Ballata:** (It.) Much. ("You got a hecka-ballata nerve playing the Liszt Sonata!")
- Broken chord:** Notes beaten into submission.
- Coloratura:** Couch potato soprano.
- Cassation:** 1. Serenade for a male soprano. 2. When the music stops in musical chairs.
- Circle of fifths:** 1. King Arthur's libations. 2. A round of drinks.
- Complete cadence:** Chord progression that doesn't need you anymore. Get over it.
- Demented chord:** When an augmented triad collides with a diminished triad. Conceived by Dr. Demento. Deviant harmonies can lead to a serious condition known as "bitonal disorder."
- Diminution:** Process of ripping into a bad student's performance.
- Dominant:** What your teacher is. (And don't you forget it!)
- Double bar:** Two drinks for the price of one.
- Enhanced improvisation techniques:** What Dick Cheney calls mistakes.
- Falstaff:** P.D.Q. Bach's infamous use of funny notation ("false staff"). Not to be confused with Verdi's lesser-known opera.
- Fermata:** Health or tourist inquiry. ("What's fermata with you? You fermata town?")
- Fixed do:** Spayed deer.
- Grosso:** "Ewww! What a yucky performance!" See also "sonata."
- Guacamole Rossini:** Nickname given to the legendary glutton who wrote (with the help of his civilian barber) many catchy operas. The lawsuit filed by the Texas Rangers over Rossini's shameless use of the Lone Ranger theme is still pending.
- Interval:** The interminable span of time it takes your student to identify a simple numeric distance of two tones.
- Lisztless:** How you feel when you can't play Liszt's music. (Just a little joke among Franz, folks!)
- Ma:** But. Used with other words, as in "But Ma, you said I could go outside!"
- Magna cum latte:** Degree conferred to caffeine-addicted musicians.
- Middle Ages:** Those years roughly between age 45 and 60.
- Mijor ("my-ger") and manor ("may-ner") triads:** Reverend Spooner's favorite chords.
- Molto:** Extreme milkshake.
- Monophonic:** 1. Sick telephone. 2. Uni-phoenetic text messenger (a redundancy).
- Moonlight Sinatra:** Beethoven doing it "his way."
- Morendo rights:** The right to get softer, even to the point of being downright silent. See also "rests."
- Music library air conditioning:** A myth. Murphy's law dictates that the air conditioning - especially in the rare collections department - *must* malfunction every summer, in direct inverse proportion to the amount of heavenly cool air wafting ever-so-reliably into all the offices of top administrators (their motto: "Arctic meat-locker settings for a cooler tomorrow").
- As a public service to frustrated music librarians everywhere, we suggest the following remedies (with apologies to Dave Barry):

1. Portable airflow enhancement devices ("hammers") should be vigorously applied to flat transparent sunlight facilitators ("windows"), thereby increasing air circulation dramatically.
2. Since heat rises, librarians should work upside-down so as to breathe relatively cooler air. (WARNING: This policy should NOT be instituted in rest rooms.)
3. Implement a fun "strip shelving" policy: Employees who shelve the most books per hour get to remove one heat-aggravating article of clothing. (CAUTION: Federal law prohibits playing this game when minors are present.)
4. Purge all "inflammatory" books from the shelves (e.g., "The Wit and Wisdom of Rap Artists").
5. Declare a state of emergency and evict all politicians from the state. (Goodbye, hot air!)

**Nuance:** Revised unit of measurement. Antonym: old ounce.

**Parallel keys:** Physicists' term for how identical car keys can exist in alternate dimensions.

**Perfect cadence:** When Kay gets the highest scores on "Dancing With the Stars."

**Peu a peu:** Parlor rug getting gradually soiled by your French poodle ("Fifi the Untrainable").

**Piano:** Instrument of torture. Historically used by children since the Dark Ages to punish their parents for trying to get them to cultivate artistic sensibilities.

**Pianissimo:** See "baby grand."

**Pianississimo:** Piano with less than 88 keys and/or smaller sized keys.

**Pianississississimo:** Really really teeny tiny piano. Emits tones audible only to babies, Superman, and members of the canine species. Precursor to the Nano-Piano.

**Plagal cadence:** Virulent chord progression akin to swine flu. Can lead to pandemic cadences.

**Polonaise:** Polynesian sandwich spread.

**Polyphonic:** Ability to talk on several phones at once.

**Polytonality:** Avian pitch set.

**Posthumous:** Composed after one's death. (Impressive, no? And they do it while *decomposing!*)

**Prepared piano:** An instrument that's practiced way more than you have. Give it up.

**Rests:** Ignored by students. Only known cure: Hold music over student's head and say, "You're under a rest. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you play will be used against you."

**Rachmaninoff:** What Jamaican parents scream after being overexposed to loud teenager music. ("Rock! Man! Enough!")

**Robert Schumann:** Politically incorrect. Must now be called Robert Schuperson.

**Root position:** 1. Location of hair follicle. 2. Proximity to soda factory.

**Schubert:** What you say to Ernie's friend to get rid of him.

**Six-four chord:** Really tall harmonic structure.

**Solmization:** Getting a tan while eating miso soup.

**Sonata:** (It.) 1. Isn't. ("It sonata what you think.") 2. That disgusting stuff in your nose.

**Sound of Music:** Horror film. ("Quick! Run for your lives! The hills are ALIVE!")

**Spiccato:** What happens when you swallow a cat.

**Staccato:** What happens if you *can't* spit that cat up.

**Stanza:** (It.) Opposite of sitting. ("His feet hurt when he stanza very long time.")

**Subito:** Sudden urge for a hoagie (with extra tomatoes).

**Supertonic:** Highly effective hair growth medicine.

**Tanto:** The Lone Ranger's sidekick.

**Tempo primo:** Excellent speed. Found only in the Muzak of the finest Italian restaurants.

**Tertian harmony:** Music from the planet Tertia.

**Ties:** Also ignored by students. Best cure: Purchase a Dilbert doll (with authentic upended tie) and wave it repeatedly in front of students. (Seriously - it works!)

**Upbeat:** How students feel when they correctly interpret the first flicker of the conductor's baton. (A theoretical condition, since this never happens.)

**Violin:** Sound of a kitten's tail being pulled through a keyhole. Synonym: nails on chalkboard.

**Violoncello:** See violin, but substitute "mountain lion" for "kitten." (For double bass, substitute "Alaskan blue whale" for "mountain lion.")